

Message Text

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FODAG

E. O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJ: PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL FOOD CORPS

REF: (A) STATE 290797, (B) STATE 301059, (C) STATE 305234

1. DURING CALL ON FAO ADG NURAL ISLAM DECEMBER 21, BAKER EXPLORED FOOD CORPS CONCEPT. ISLAM REPLIED THAT ORGANIZATION OF FAO STUDY REQUESTED OF DG WOULD BE RESPONSIBILITY OF HIS DEPARTMENT IN CONSULTATION WITH YRIART'S DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT. FROM HIS REMARKS IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE HAS NOT YET GIVEN PROBLEM MUCH THOUGHT AND THAT IS IS NOT HIGH ON HIS LIST OF PRIORITIES.

2. ISLAM'S RESPONSE TO FOOD CORPS IDEA WAS TO RECALL PEACE CORPS AND UNHAPPY EXPERIENCE SOME OF ITS MEMBERS HAD IN RURAL BANGLADESH COMMUNITIES. HE WAS OUTSPOKEN AGAINST IDEA OF USING FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS ON VILLAGE LEVEL, POINTING OUT THAT BETTER CONTRIBUTION COULD BE MADE BY YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CERTAIN MECHANICAL (E.G. EVEN CAR AND TRUCK REPAIR MAINTENANCE) SKILLS OFTEN LACKING IN LDC'S. HE DID NOT SEEM PARTICULARLY TAKEN WITH BASIC FOOD CORPS CONCEPT OF UNILIZING YOUTHFUL LDC NATIONALS EVEN WHEN BAKER SUGGESTED IT WAS A WAY OF WIDENING HORIZONS AND EXPERIENCE OF LCD GRADUATES
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OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS WHICH ISLAM'S DEPARTMENT IS ASSISTING IN NUMEROUS LDC'S. FUNDAMENTALLY, HE SAW VALUE OF FOOD CORPS IN TERMS OF TECHNICAL SKILLS IT COULD BRING INTO PLAY. HOWEVER, HE CLEARLY FAVORS ACHIEVING THIS OBJECTIVE UNDER VARIOUS EXISTING FAO/PROGRAMS RATHER THAN A NEW ONE WHICH WOULD PERHAPS BE OUTSIDE OF FAO'S DIRECT CONTROL AND APT TO ENGAGE LOWER LEVEL OF SKILLS.

3. COMMENT: IN LIGHT OF ISLAM'S COMMENTS AND OF PARA 4 OF REFTTEL A, BAKER DID NOT SUGGEST A WASHINGTON CONSULTATION. ISLAM HAS CLEARLY NOT TAKEN FOOD CORPS IDEA VERY FAR. IF WE WANT HIM TO DO SO WE WILL NEED TO PROVIDE HIM SOME DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT WHICH HE CAN RELATE TO HIS OWN EXPERIENCE AND FAO'S PRIORITIES. HE IS AN OPEN-MINDED AND IMAGINATIVE MAN AND WILL CLEARLY HAVE AN IMPACT ULTIMATELY ON DG'S REPORT. HOWEVER, UNLESS U.S. PREPARED TO GIVE CONCEPT HIGH PRIORITY, WE CANNOT EXPECT TO INSPIRE ACTIVE, FAVORABLE INVOLVEMENT BY SENIOR FAO OFFICIALS SUCH AS ISLAM WHO ARE BEING PRESSED HARD BY DG ON OTHER PRIORITIES. UNTIL WE ARE IN A POSITION TO DO THIS, PERHAPS AFTER OTHER RESPONSES TO REFTELS HAVE BEEN DIGESTED, WE BELIEVE PROPOSING AN ISLAM TRIP TO WASHINGTON PREMATURE AND MIGHT DO THE IDA MORE HARM THAN GOOD.

4. IN APPROACHING FAO ON THE FOOD CORPS, W BELIEVE THERE SHOULD BE NO ILLUSIONS THAT SAOUMA WILL BE LIKELY TO COME OUT IN FAVOR OF TRYING OUT THE FOOD CORPS CONCEPT UNLESS HE CAN PUT IT INTO A FORMAT WHICH MEETS FAO PRIORITIES AND GIVES FAO THE PRINCIPAL MANAGING ROLE. THIS JUDGMENT BASED ON TENDENCY OF FAO TO LOOK WITH SOME DISFAVOR ON INSTITUTIONS WHICH COMPETE FOR IMPORTANT DEVELOPED COUNTRY RESOURCES UNLESS IT CAN CONTROL USE OF THOSE RESOURCES AND KEY PERSONNEL.

5. WHILE WE WOULD PREFER TO DEFER ANY DEFINITIVE JUDGMENT OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OUR OWN ON FOOD CORPS UNTIL KEY FIELD POSTS IN LDC'S HAVE BEEN HEARD FROM, OUR PRESENT INCLINATION WOULD BE TO LOOK TOWARDS THE IDEA OF TESTING THE CONCEPT IN AN APPROPRIATE REGIONAL SETTING WHERE THERE IS A FUNCTIONING REGIONAL STRUCTURE WITHIN WHICH YOUTHFUL LDC TALENTS AND EXPERIENCE CAN BE EXCHANGED, AN APPROPRIATE EXISTING CONSORTIUM FOR DEVELOPED COUNTRY INPUTS, AND A VARIETY OF BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL PROJECTS IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE TO WHICH VOLUNTEERS MIGHT BE ATTACHED. FOR BOTH UDGETARY AND PRAC-TICAL REASONS, THIS MIGHT SEEM THE MORE PRUDENT COURSE. IT ALSO HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF PERMITTING SOME TESTING OF THE CONCEPT TO BE LAUNCHED WITHOUT WAITING FOR AN FAO REPORT WHICH, WHEN IT APPEARS, MAY MAKE THIS SORT OF PRAGMATIC, PARTIAL APPROACH POLITICALLY MORE DIFFICULT TO ATTEMPT (UNLESS REPORT ITSELF IS INFLUENCED BY INITIATION OF A REGIONAL TESTING PROCESS.)

6. WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF DEPARTMENT WOULD HAVE RESPONSES TO REFTELS REPEATED TO ROME FOR FODAG.GARDNER

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